



To: Gary Holloway, Vermont Agency for Commerce and Community Development (ACCD)

From: Kevin Brennan, Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)

Re: Initial report on the Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) Program

Date: August 10, 2020

INTRODUCTION

SEVCA is submitting this initial report on the Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) program in accordance with the terms of the grant agreement between SEVCA, in its role as Statewide Coordinating Agency, and the State of Vermont, represented by ACCD. After a number of months of planning and development, SEVCA and ACCD finalized and fully executed the grant agreement on August 10, 2020 and SEVCA hired Jean Myung Hamilton – who had been providing effective leadership, as Statewide Task Force Chair, in the development of the program – as the VEE Statewide Project Coordinator. It also completed and disseminated a Request for Proposals (RFP) from prospective “Hubs” to recruit and enroll restaurants to participate in the program, and to manage the program startup and implementation in their designated areas. In addition, the program opened its first “Hub” in Brattleboro, where meals are now being provided, and received applications from a number of prospective hubs from other regions of the state. The work of the VEE Statewide Task Force (membership listed below) is now focused on reviewing incoming applications, through a Proposal Review Team (membership listed below).

HUBS

The “Hub” established in Brattleboro under the leadership of the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance (DBA) commenced provision of dinner-time meals on Monday, August 3rd. While bad weather (Tropical Storm Isaias) interrupted meal provision on Tuesday, things got back on track by Wednesday and Thursday (in Brattleboro, meals will be provided through VEE four days per week, Mon-Thurs). DBA is working with MamaSezz (a locally-based food production business) and numerous community-based organizations to distribute the meals that are being produced by a mixture of six local restaurants. The effort provided 497 meals on Monday, to people representing 345 households. Tuesday’s distribution, before being stopped by the storm, was 210 meals, representing 210 households. Wednesday saw 669 meals being distributed to 122 households, while Thursday saw 662 meals go to 152 households. It seems that as the week progressed, more people came to pick up multiple meals for others in their household than had been the case at the start of the program. While the data on the number of people self-certifying that they are 65 or older is only partial at this point, it seems that relatively few people (25 out of the first day’s 497 total meals, or slightly more than 5%) who were taking immediate advantage of the program were 65 or older. We may well get higher percentages as the organizations assisting with meal distribution report back to DBA on the age of the people to whom their meals went (to the extent this information is available).

Our Mission is to empower and partner with individuals and communities to alleviate the hardships of poverty, provide opportunities to thrive, and eliminate root causes of poverty in southeastern Vermont.

Beyond the Brattleboro activity, the Statewide Task Force's Proposal Review Team is now in receipt of three proposals – the first set received in a rolling application process – that it is actively reviewing, even as we continue to work through the challenges, presented particularly to the restaurants, by the program's financial record-keeping requirements aimed at preventing duplication of federal funds used in support of the program. It is expected that this group will convene on Thursday, August 13, to review the current applications. The proposals received thus far are from the following areas:

1. Vergennes (and surrounding villages/towns)
2. Chester / Springfield / Londonderry (and surrounding villages/towns)
3. Hardwick / Craftsbury / Albany (and surrounding villages/towns)

We are further aware that organizations are preparing proposals that would cover significant portions of the I-89 corridor, from Hartford through to Burlington. More details to come once we actually receive proposals.

NEXT STEPS

1. Ongoing monitoring of the program as it is being delivered in Brattleboro;
2. Ongoing review of, and approval decisions on "Hub" applications, as noted above;
3. Ongoing definition of the nature of the required financial record-keeping by the Hubs and restaurants. This is a matter that is likely to need a good deal of dedicated time, whether from existing personnel working on the program, or from contracted professionals who can advise on appropriate accounting/bookkeeping standards and protocols as it focuses on the regulations and restrictions under which the VEE is required to operate.

We are looking forward to engaging with the additional Hubs over the course of the coming week and beyond, and identifying more completely how we are going to implement this program throughout the state.

Thank you for reviewing this report. Please let me know if you have any questions, need additional information, or would like to discuss any aspect of the program's startup further.

Kevin Brennan, COVID-19 Projects Manager

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Vermont Everyone East Statewide Task Force Members

State Coordinator – Jean Myung Hamilton, SEVCA
Fiscal Agent - SEVCA – Carolyn Sweet, Steve Geller & Kevin Brennan
VT AHS – Sue Graff
VT ACCD – Gary Holloway
VEM/SEOC - Erica Bornemann
VT PSD - Chris Herrick
Hunger Free VT & Hunger Councils of VT – Anore Horton, Faye Mack
VT Foodbank – John Sayles, Andrea Solazzo, Zach Herbert
VT Hospitality Coalition – Sue Bette
VT Fresh Network – Tara Pereira
VAAFM – Abbey Willard
VSJF - Farm To Plate – Ellen Kahler
VCF – Sarah Waring, Chelsea Lewis
VT Association of Area Agencies on Aging – Janet Hunt
Capstone - Sue Minter
Downtown Brattleboro Alliance - Stephanie Bonin

Vermont Everyone Eats Proposal Review Team

SEVCA - Jean Myung Hamilton (State Coordinator)
SEVCA – Carolyn Sweet
SEVCA – Kevin Brennan
Vermont Sustainable Justice Foundation - Farm To Plate – Ellen Kahler
VT Foodbank – Andrea Solazzo

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